

**SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE**  
**CURRICULUM, EMPLOYERS & MARKET REQUIREMENTS COMMITTEE**  
**held on 24 October 2019**

**<sup>1</sup>PRESENT** S Eden (C); T Floyd (E); T Jackson (P); S Morgan (E); J Porter (St).

In attendance: J Chapman, Marketing Manager (mins 131 to 145)  
S Grant, Deputy Principal – Corporate  
S Hermiston, Director of Information & Funding (mins 105 to 135)  
C James, Assistant Principal HE (mins 131 to 135)  
M Lauder, Governor  
J Milburn, Deputy Principal - Curriculum  
S Willson, Clerk to the Corporation

**APOLOGIES AND MEMBERSHIP**

105. The Committee Chair welcomed J Porter to her meeting of the Committee since her appointment as Student Governor and M Lauder who was attending the meeting as a guest.
106. The Committee Chair reported that S Duckering (Director of Research and Innovation at the University of Portsmouth) had accepted the invitation to join the Committee as a co-opted member, subject to approval of her appointment by the Board of Governors. The Committee looked forward to welcoming her at the next meeting.

**DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

107. There were no interests to be declared in matters to be discussed at this meeting.

**MINUTES**

108. **Resolved** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2019 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

**MATTERS ARISING**

Information, Advice & Guidance (minute 87/18)

109. The Deputy Principal – Curriculum confirmed that additional text in relation to the needs of employers had been included in the Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance Policy prior to approval by the Board of Governors.
110. There were no other matters arising not covered by items on the agenda.

**COMMITTEE BUSINESS PLAN**

111. The Committee had received the report of the Clerk setting out the Committee's forward business plan for 2019–20.
112. It was noted that there was a role for the Committee in monitoring, and reporting to the Board, the delivery of the College's HE Access and Participation Plan (APP), with an initial

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<sup>1</sup> (C) = Co-opted; (E) = External; (P) = Principal; (S) = Staff; (St) = Student

report on the 2020-21 to 2024-25 APP at this meeting and updates expected at further meetings, including monitoring of the 2018-19 and 2019-20 plans.

113. The Committee Chair highlighted that the EM3 LEP Skills and Labour Market Analysis had been added to the agenda at this meeting and that the anticipated review of the Employer Engagement Strategy had been rescheduled to the Spring term.
114. Asked about the timescale for developments to the College's future T Levels offer, the Deputy Principal – Curriculum noted that, where relevant, T Levels would be incorporated in the 3 Year Curriculum Plan presented to the Committee in the Summer term.
115. In terms of the College's eligibility to deliver future T Levels, the Deputy Principal – Curriculum explained that the cohort of learners for potential T Levels in 2021-22-21 had been too low for the College's bid to be accepted. The College had joined the Teacher Regional Improvement Project (TRIP) to develop closer links with employers in the digital sector in readiness for T Level implementation, in collaboration with the Isle of Wight College, Fareham College and Havant & South Downs College. Through the project, a number of College staff were also receiving T Level professional development (to date in three areas – introduction to T Levels, T Level Digital – Pedagogy, and the role of middle managers in supporting T Levels). Overall, the project was intended to create sustained college/employer partnerships to provide industry learner placements and to improve learner employability and meet employer needs in the longer term. Participation in the project would also qualify the College to apply to deliver future T Levels.
116. The Deputy Principal – Curriculum explained that there were two land-based T Level pathways available from 2023-24 under Agriculture, Environment and Animal Care: Animal Care and Management; and Agriculture, Land Management and Production. Colleges were providing feedback on the proposed occupational maps and pathways via Landex. Additionally, the Principal reported efforts by the National Land-Based College (NLBC) to engage more bodies from land-based employers to input into the consultation.
117. Members welcomed engagement by College management and the NLBC in the consultation and discussed the challenges in developing T Levels which were fit for purpose for learners and employers.
118. The Deputy Principal – Corporate reported that the College had submitted a return/application to the DfE's T Level capital fund which was intended to fund improvements to buildings and facilities for the delivery of T Levels.
119. **Resolved** – that the Committee's forward business plan for 2019-20 be approved with updates in relation to the HE APP and the LEP Skills and Labour Market Analysis.

## **CURRICULUM RECRUITMENT**

120. The Committee had received the report of the Director of Information and Funding on enrolment trends across Further Education, Apprenticeships and Higher Education in relation to the curriculum offer.
121. It was noted that the current overall increase in 16-18-year-old enrolments 2019-20 would, if sustained at that level till the December census date (R04), result in a £500-600k increase to ESFA income in 2019-20, in line with the two-year financial plan.
122. Members discussed the analysis of each area and of the Sparsholt and Andover campuses, noting the decline in Year 11 applicants overall (which had a greater impact at Andover College because of the smaller cohorts) and the variation year-on-year of intakes

from individual educational institutions, the reasons underlying these and various actions being taken.

123. The Student Governor provided feedback from her experience of enrolling at Andover College and of views held locally by pupils/learners and their families, noting that she believed there was still an element of negative reputational legacy relating to the former Cricklade College, now 11 years in the past. She endorsed activities such as providing revision sessions and masterclasses in schools to showcase Andover College's teaching and support for learners.
124. Members also sought to understand the variations year on year in enrolments to individual faculty areas and the Deputy Principal – Curriculum explained factors such as changes which had been implemented to rationalise the curriculum offer to seek to provide a better fit to skills needs and to support progression.
125. Asked if changes to the offer undermined efforts to continue to build the reputation of Andover College, the Deputy Principal – Curriculum stressed that the changes were intended to give more clarity to the intent of the curriculum, putting in place progression maps for careers, with a range of entry points, and that this was being reflected in marketing activities, such as taster days. In addition, separate open days and prospectuses were available for Andover Sixth and for Andover College's vocational/professions offer. The Deputy Principal – Corporate reported that Andover College students had also been involved in the master planning exercise on behalf of Test Valley Borough Council for the Andover Culture Quarter development and that the development provided further communication opportunities.
126. In relation to 19+ year old learners, the Committee noted that there was an upward trajectory for adult learning overall (including both loans funded and full cost provision). The College's adult education budget (AEB) had been increased and the challenge was to deliver this during the year, given that not all of the allocation had been spent in 2018-19.
127. The Committee also noted that, although the overall apprenticeship numbers had declined, this was the result of the College ceasing virtually all associate (subcontractor) apprenticeship activity and that numbers of apprenticeships delivered by the College had increased year-on-year despite the national decline. Asked about the main subjects for apprenticeships, the Deputy Principal – Corporate explained that around half were Horticulture and a significant number were in Game. Game apprenticeships presented a challenge in terms of retention because the apprentices' time spent in College was delivered in a block and attendance was a struggle, significantly reducing the achievement rate for Gamekeeping apprenticeships compared to other Gamekeeping FE.
128. In relation to HE, the Committee welcome the increase in overall numbers, noting that first year numbers had largely recovered from the decline the previous year and that third year numbers were also much improved. It was noted that the underlying picture was more complex when HNCs at Andover College were taken into account as these only had a duration of one year.
129. Asked about whether there were any potential risks associated with the increase in Vet Nursing students, the Assistant Principal – HE explained that Vet Nursing continued to a popular degree with high levels of employment but that further growth would need careful management to ensure that University Centre Sparsholt (UCS) was able to maintain the required standards for larger cohorts.

130. The Committee noted the report's conclusions and commended the work of the College in relation to both FE and HE recruitment.

### **HE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION**

131. The Committee had received the report of the Assistant Principal – HE summarising the targets and additional commitments in the Access and Participation Plan 2020/21 – 2024/25 (APP), the investment required and the next steps for delivering and monitoring implementation of the APP.
132. The Committee noted that the delivery of the APP at management level would be overseen by the HE Strategy Group and agreed that there was a good fit with the remit of the Committee. This good fit particularly applied to matters such as scrutiny of recruitment, marketing and communication activities, and curriculum intent and outcomes/destinations.
133. The Assistant Principal emphasised that delivery of the APP required a 'whole provider' approach and noted that HE leads at Landex colleges were meeting to share ideas and effective practices, particularly in relation to reaching BAME and IMD (index of multiple deprivation) students.
134. It was noted that the College was due submit data to the OfS in January on the 2018-19 APP and the Committee requested a report on this and progress on the 2019-20 plan to the Spring term meeting of the Committee.
135. **Resolved** – that the Committee's business plan be updated to include an update on APP at the 27 February 2020 meeting.

### **MARKETING STRATEGY**

136. The Committee had received the report of the Principal and Marketing Manager on the impact of the Marketing Strategy for 2018-19 and the aims and objectives of the Marketing Strategy for 2019-20.
137. The Committee recognised the success of the 2018-19 marketing strategy, including in relation to an increase in enrolments in HE, and that management found the framework of objectives and actions clear and helpful in engaging staff across the College in delivering activities.
138. The Marketing Manager highlighted key priorities for 2019-20, including in relation to schools liaison, 'paid for' online presence, soft rebranding of Andover College Sixth Form, supporting the HE APP, and reaching armed forces families.
139. Members sought additional information in a number of areas, discussing engagement with Test Valley Borough Council in relation to the Andover Cultural Quarter and linkages to government policies and support at local level for military families. Members also sought more information about the timing of the animal health and welfare research centre redevelopment and the Deputy Principal – Curriculum summarised the key stages for completion.
140. Members discussed schools and careers activities, with the Principal highlighting potential opportunities for linking to the work of the Careers Enterprise Company with schools which it was anticipated would increase locally in the future.
141. Responding to a Member's feedback about young people seeking apprenticeships in the farming sector without having first gained some practical experience and the core skills to be safe and productive, the Deputy Principal – Corporate explained that, although the

College encouraged potential apprenticeships to undertake a Level 2 qualification first, the apprenticeship programme rules (which were not set by the College) permitted starting at 16 years old and some young people tried to seek employment as an apprentice at this age. Although, apprenticeships could be a reasonable option for young people from certain farming backgrounds who had already gained essential skills and experience and would be supervised during their apprenticeships.

142. The Marketing Manager agreed that this could be a challenging, noting that there was a perceived lack of understanding of apprenticeships within schools and more advice should be given about undertaking a full-time FE qualification first.
143. The Committee noted that the recruitment targets for September 2020 were still be finalised after the R04 (data recording and reporting to the ESFA) point (42 days after enrolment). The Committee Chair highlighted the notional FE targets reported for both campuses and the HE target and the Principal confirmed that the related income growth had already been assumed in the 2020-21 financial plan but that the additional funding announced by the government for FE had not yet been included in the forecasts.
144. The Committee endorsed the 2019-20 marketing strategy as supporting delivery of the College's strategic plan, noting that the 16-18 and HE demographics remained challenging for the next two years.
145. **Resolved** – that the 2019-20 Marketing Strategy be approved on the basis that the 2020-21 enrolment targets would be confirmed to the Committee at its next meeting.

#### **EMPLOYER OFFER**

146. The Deputy Principal – Corporate provided an update on the grant from the EM3 LEP Local Growth Fund for the Innovation South skills project partnership and accompanying bid to the European Social Fund (ESF).
147. It was noted that the project provided a strategic opportunity for the College to develop its full cost offer for businesses and to establish the infrastructure to provide more online and flexible training provision for employees. The 'virtual campus' would offer short programmes at varying levels with a combination of online and face-to-face delivery, including cyber security and digital skills from Spring 2020.
148. The Principal reported that M Simmons, a former Deputy Principal of the College, was engaged in initial stages of the project development.
149. Asked by a Member about the timing and interdependency of the LEP grant and ESF bid, the Deputy Principal – Corporate confirmed that the initial project would proceed regardless but, with the agreement of the LEP, the first stage had been slowed down and limited to a £40k spend until the end of December, match funded by the cost of the College's staff time. There was no certainty as to whether the ESF grant would be awarded but, even without it, the partners would be able to develop an online platform with 12 units to build from in the future.
150. Members also pointed to the potential benefit of using existing commercial viable platforms for delivering online learning modules where this was feasible and cost effective.
151. The Principal reported that the College had also joined the Solent Apprenticeships Hub, under the Solent LEP, which was an ESF funded partnership supported by local councils providing information and guidance to employers about apprenticeships. By also

encouraging other colleges to join, it was hoped to increase the connectivity and understanding between employers and FE colleges in the region.

### **MARKET ANALYSIS**

152. The Committee had received, for information a presentation to the EM3 LEP on local skills and labour market analysis and discussed the data, noting that this was an interim presentation with more investigation and analysis planned by the LEP.
153. Members discussed the findings with management, discussing insights in relation to skills demand in the local area and links to development of the curriculum.
154. The Committee Chair welcomed the sharing of the analysis to support the Committee's consideration and noted that future information of this type would also be welcome as and when it became available.

### **HEALTHCHECK REPORT**

155. The Committee noted the most recent Healthcheck report (2019/07) and that there were no matters relevant to its remit which had not been covered elsewhere in the meeting.
156. In relation to financial health of the College, the Committee Chair reported an update received from the Director of Finance in relation to the July Management Accounts which improved the reported position on pension liabilities and would be reported to the Resources Committee.
157. The meeting ended at 12.00 pm.